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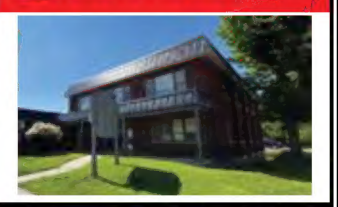
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Back to books page 3 **Trailblazing Talks** page 9 **Woodpecker wonders** page 15

Taking a peep
It was a colourful Easter weekend at the annual Abbey Gardens spring event, where kids of all ages participated in an Easter egg hunt on the chilly day. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Highlands East STR bylaw: a hot topic

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Community feedback around the Short Term Rental (STR) licensing program was shared at the regular meeting for Highlands East council on March 24.

In a staff report presented by the township CAO/treasurer Brittany McCaw, it was noted that in April, 2024, council passed a short term rental licensing bylaw, which came into force and effect on October 1, 2024.

At the February 10, 2026 meeting, council directed staff to undertake an STR licensing bylaw consultation, and indicated that written submissions could be received, and online and paper surveys be distributed to those eligible for feedback.

The survey was closed on April 2, but as of the time of the report to council, staff had received 119 responses from the community. The number of identified STRs in and around Highlands East amounts

see STR page 12

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STR tax questioned by community stakeholders

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Haliburton County business stakeholders congregated in one room for the first time in two years this past week, in what turned out to be an informative and somewhat controversial meeting.

The County of Haliburton hosted a morning stakeholder meeting on Thursday, April 2 at the Pinestone, where businesses from across the county were invited to connect, network, and share any updates from within their industries.

These meetings were once common practice, with volunteers Barrie Martin and Bruce Ballentine leading the monthly sessions in an effort to connect community partners. The meetings evolved over the years through the COVID-19 pandemic, and this was the first meeting presented by the current manager of tourism for the county, Angelica Ingram.

"This is definitely something that's been on my plate for two years," opened Ingram to a packed room, "and there's clearly an appetite for something like this on a regular basis."

The first item on the agenda was the Municipal Services Corporation. Ingram dove in to explain that in spring of 2024, all townships in the County of Haliburton passed a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) bylaw on Short Term Rentals (STR), levied on short-term stays of less than 30 consecutive days.

Council members approved MAT rates of four per cent for Algonquin Highlands, Highlands East, and Minden Hills, and two per cent for Dysart et al.

As per provincial legislation, 50 per cent of the MAT collected must be provided to an entity responsible for tourism marketing and development at the county level, and the remaining 50 per cent can be applied to projects specific to the lower tiered municipalities.

Kasey Rogerson, a representative from the Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) addressed a full house at last week's tourism stakeholder meeting at the Pinestone. /photo by Tegan Legge

Ingram noted that the County will implement a Municipal Services Corporation (MSC) to manage their portion collected, which will be comprised of four council representatives as well as three members of the public. "It will be a transparent process and everyone will be kept in the loop," confirmed Ingram.

Once the board selection for the MSC is complete, a plan will be developed to begin the transition to a new Destination Management Organization (DMO).

While the MAT has been collected since October, 2024, a number of attendees at the Wednesday meeting noted that this was the first they had heard of the program. While some recognized the value of funding local tourism initiatives, others presented challenges to the plan.

Tom Gutowski, the owner of the Lutterworth Trailer Park in Minden, shared that he believes the added tax will drive visitors away. He questioned the director of economic development for Haliburton County, Scott Ovell, as to whether the County intends to financially support businesses impacted by the tax. It was noted that trailer parks are not taxed through the MAT.

Elizabeth Oakley, a STR operator in Highlands East, shared her distaste of the program. "With respect, what this is doing, is it's going to drive short term rentals underground," she said. "You're defeating the purpose of increasing tourism by making it harder to keep things open."

Kasey Rogerson, a representative from Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) shared that the MAT is present in over 80 municipalities across the province, and so far, has raised over $250 million for tourism-based initiatives in those communities. Barrie Martin, an OHTO board member, noted that he recently visited a community where the tax was implemented, and shared the programs that had been put in place as a result. "There's proof that it's working," he said.

While the newly-implemented tax is in its early days, Ovell noted that there is not an immediate plan for the revenue received, but as numbers are finalized and the MSC is put in place, the next steps for community benefit will begin to roll out.

County–wide burn ban set in stone

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

While it's only just starting to feel like spring, the annual county-wide fire ban is officially in place.

From early spring to late fall every year, all daytime burning is banned between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day.

The burn season is regulated by the Wildfire Fire Management Act R.S.O. 1990 c.F24; a regulation set out by the Province of Ontario, which indicates "no open fires from two hours after sunrise until two hours before sunset, from April 1st until October 31st except for cooking or warmth."

While some have challenged the regulation with the longer winter season this year, Chris Baughman, the fire chief for Highlands East, noted that the rules won't be changing anytime soon. "There has been no discussion regarding moving the dates as this is a provincial regulation," he said. "Making it less restrictive is not within our authority at the municipal level."

While it may still seem wintery out there, Baughman confirmed that his department has already had a busy spring. "This is the time of year we usually have several wildfire calls," he said. "One day of sunshine on the brown exposed grassy areas creates volatile fast burning conditions. Kawartha Lakes have already experienced a grass fire that led to the loss of a structure."

> *"There has been no discussion regarding moving the dates as this is a provincial regulation*
>
> — Chris Baughman, Highlands East Fire Chief

Baughman encouraged anyone with further questions to reach out to their individual municipalities. Burn permits can be acquired for specific projects.

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Bringing books to life

A conversation with Rosemary Sadlier

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Back in February, I wrote a story on Black History Month, which was recognizing 30 years of celebrations across the country.

When I wrote the article, I referenced events at the local libraries, as well as a display created by Haliburton School of Art and Design, which highlighted a number of Black artists with ties to the community.

But I knew I needed a bit more to the story. I wanted to tie back to the roots of the celebratory month, so I did some research. I learned about the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS), books dedicated to educating and informing, and organizations committed to featuring the significant contributions of Black Canadians.

And at the root of all these pivotal pillars that contributed to Black History Month as we know it today, was Rosemary Sadlier.

Sadlier was the president of the OBHS for 22 years. During this time, she pushed the federal government to properly implement a month-long celebration of Black history across the country. From her efforts, Jean Augustine, a Member of Parliament at the time, made a motion to support the initiative, which made its way to the House of Commons in fall of 1995, before officially being designated a national celebration in February, 1996.

And that's just one piece of the puzzle.

I was in awe of Sadlier's efforts, and referenced her in the February article.

And five days later, I received an email. The subject line was "Thank you!"

It was from Rosemary Sadlier.

And while I often feel that our little rural newspapers don't always get in front of many eyes, somehow, this article had a ripple effect.

After some friendly back and forth, Sadlier agreed to sit down for an interview.

And that's how I found myself, on a dull grey day, right smack dab between seasons, curled up with a cup of tea, and listening to the story of Rosemary Sadlier.

Sadlier was born and raised in Toronto, with her mother having ties to the Underground Railroad survivors, and her father a descendant of Black Loyalists who fled to New Brunswick during the American Revolution.

Rosemary Sadlier, a Canadian author and the former president of the Ontario Black History Society, took some time to connect with local newspaper readers this past week. /submitted

While Toronto was always home, her family had ties to Bancroft, where she spent many summers cottaging, swimming, and of course, reading. "As a child, it was very much a part of my life," said Sadlier, as we settled into our conversation. "When you're there, you're away from your friends, away from the television. You had a radio, and you had books."

Books. These were the best friends of Sadlier growing up; transporting her to a different world, capturing a time and a place that reached far beyond the confines of reality. "As a kid, a part of the reality of who I am, is that I always seemed to have something," said Sadlier. "A cold or a flu. Books were a constant companion. They wait for you. I still find it very hard to stop in the middle of a chapter. If it's a really compelling story, you just have to know how the book will end."

And books were what opened her eyes to the world. "Reading commits you to following through with an idea," she said. "It commits you to find parallels to a world different from your own, and it introduces so many phenomenal ideas."

Through reading, Sadlier realized she wanted to study people, and solve problems. This led her to explore a sociology degree, before pursuing a master's degree in social work from the University of Toronto.

But then her life took a turn, and a family focus fell to the forefront. Sadlier married and had three children, and while her love for reading and writing were still present, the priorities shifted.

This was when she started to think of ways to reconnect with herself while in the role of a mother. She joined the Black History Society of Ontario, an organization founded in 1978 to bring Black History Month to the City of Toronto. And during one meeting, Sadlier was interviewed by City TV.

That night, the segment aired, and a publisher watched the snippet with Sadlier featured. Before long, he was in contact with her, and told her he wanted her to write a book. "All this other stuff," she laughed, "and now I'm back to my first love: writing and words."

While Sadlier did not originally have a specific topic set for the book, at the time, she was a young mother. So after reading an article in the *Toronto Star*, Sadlier had her lightbulb moment, and *Leading the Way, Black Women in Canada* came to be.

Designed for children, Sadlier saw an opportunity to connect with kids, and bring Black history to life for all ages. "What I realized is that a kids book isn't just for kids," she said. "The parents read the books, the teachers read the books, and it's an entryway for so many lessons."

Sadlier went on to pen a number of other books, designed for all ages, educating readers about the significant contributions of Black Canadians. "My goal wasn't to just to write a book," she said, "but to write a book about things we don't know about."

When asked about her greatest points of pride, aside from raising her three kids, Sadlier noted that her legacy will continue through the national recognition of Black History Month. She was also instrumental in the official proclamation of August 1 as Emancipation Day, marking the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, including Canada. This was celebrated in Toronto before being recognized at a provincial level in 2008, and a national level in 2021. "It's important to know that within our history, there was a period of enslavement," said Sadlier. "People don't always realize that. And that connects us to so many other countries."

And those are just a few pieces of the puzzle.

Through it all, Sadlier honours her original ties to words and books; her best friends growing up. Since stepping down as President for the OBHS, she continues to write, continues to present, continues to educate. She is adamant about telling the stories of Black Canadians, and dedicated to shedding light on the past in an effort to wipe away the cobwebs of the future. Both an ending and a beginning of a lifelong legacy.

"I'm not only honouring my own ancestors," she said, while our call wrapped up and the rain began to pelt the windows. "But I am also hopefully helping people appreciate that we've always been a very diverse country, and we always will be."

Minden Healthcare Auxiliary excited for spring offerings

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

With the passing of seasons comes change. As the weather gets warmer, our heavy coats are replaced by light jackets, the winter boots are swapped out for sneakers.

And with the changing of the seasons, the Minden Healthcare Auxiliary is keeping up with fashion trends with their new spring line of jewellery, summer dresses, purses, hats, and other new accessories.

The auxiliary directly supports healthcare across the county, donating funds towards Haliburton Highlands Health Services' most needed projects.

To date, the organization has supported Minden's long-term care facility, HHHS adult day program, the Minden Health Hub, and brand new gynecological care equipment.

Cecille Gibbons, market coordinator for the auxiliary, says that they have donated around $20,000 towards gynecological equipment alone.

Why not support the auxiliary and sport the newest seasonal fashion trends with something from their spring line.

With the new items to the gift shop, the auxiliary is excited to announce that they will also have a blow out sale of their previous stock on two special Fridays: May 8 and 15.

"There will be some great bargains so mark these dates on your calendar," said Gibbons.

This year, the organization hopes to increase their presence in the public to bolster their volunteers and their donations.

Keep an eye out while visiting the Minden Farmers' Market. At their table, they will have a variety of goods to purchase, as well as tickets for their annual Wine on Wheels fundraiser.

The group is planning on completing the raffle earlier in the year, to allow seasonal visitors to participate in the fun.

"The more funds we raise, the more we can help out in our community," said Gibbons.

On Friday, July 10, volunteers will be out and about in the community collecting donations for their annual Tag Day. Donors will be given a delightful sticker after donating, showing others that you support local healthcare. Tag Day will run from 8 a.m. until late in the afternoon.

Gibbons reports that they are kicking the year off strong and that "everything is going well and positive".

The Minden Healthcare Auxiliary's Gift Shop, located just within the entrance to Hyland Crest, located at 6 McPherson street. Their hours are currently 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. from Tuesday to Thursday and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Fridays.

The organization is always looking for more volunteers. If you would like to help expand their hours and support local healthcare, please email Gibbons at Cgibbonsa24@hotmail.com. For as little as an hour per week, you can make a difference.

Maple madness

Maple syrup operations opened their doors across the county, as a part of the annual Maple Weekend this past weekend. Pictured, Rick Wood holds up a bottle of his Colour of Wood maple syrup to show guests the difference in syrup colours from throughout the harvest season. /THOMAS SMITH staff

Godfrey Tyler of Waverly Brook Farm stands by his sap boiling this past Sunday.

Rick Wood passes out a refractometer to guests during a rainy Maple Weekend. The refractometer is used to calculate the sugar content of the syrup.

Prolific playwright pens Whodunnit

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

It was as if by destiny that the Wilberforce Loop Troupe and Royal Canadian Legion Branch 624 collaborated for the group's latest production.

Yet, it is a perfect combination.

One, a pursuant of cultural presence in the community, the other, a cornerstone of community and connection.

Mary Barker, playwright of the Loop Troupe, says that the group was approached by Rick Cleveland, President of the Wilberforce Legion, to see if they would be interested in doing a dinner theatre performance for the Legion's 100th anniversary this year. The money collected from the performances would be used to renovate the Legion's kitchen and bring their equipment up to date.

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Excited to contribute back to the community, the troupe quickly agreed to the idea. With Legion volunteers Mary Watt and Cathy Clark joining the team to assist with planning.

With Watt being in charge of entertainment and Clark responsible for the meal to be served with the dinner theatre, a plan came together.

With a 12-person cast from the troupe, Barker realized early on that it would be best that she write the script for the performance.

While initially pitched as a single night, the troupe had so much fun rehearsing, they demanded two nights.

"I got a little carried away and it blossomed into a full production," said Barker.

Clark agreed to lead the dinners for both nights of the performances, but the meals had to be different, deciding on the Saturday show's dinner being cordon bleu and the Sunday show's dinner being lasagna.

An entirely original play, there was one thing missing during the process: if the show was going to be about the Legion, the Legion had to be directly involved.

That meant that Cleveland had to act, or someone had to play him as a character.

Barker was caught off guard when Cleveland agreed to perform in the show.

"It turns out he is just as much of a ham as the rest of them," said Barker, with a laugh.

As the troupe has rehearsed the show, the show keeps getting funnier and funnier, says Barker. They are confident that Cleveland will wind up a regular performer with the group.

When the troupe actors had the scripts in their own hands, their characters developed into having a life of their own.

"After every rehearsal I have laughed so hard that my jaw hurts from laughing," said Barker.

Recently, the group went to see the performance of *Calendar Girls* by the Highlands Little Theatre. Barker says that the troupe has taken much inspiration from the performance, congratulating them on their wonderful show.

For Barker as a playwright, she says that there isn't a single inspiration or comedic role model that she aspires to when writing.

"I write for necessity," said Barker. "We needed a script and we needed it to be funny."

The play, titled *The Art of Deception Dinner Theatre: A Masterpiece of Bad Decisions* revolves around the work of a talented local artist going missing.

Barker is excited to give back to the Legion, as a longtime fan of their fish and chips and wing nights on Fridays. They hope that the funds will allow the necessary repairs and for the Legion to purchase new equipment.

With packed houses for their past performances and a day for this dinner theatre show already sold out, Barker says that the community has been hugely supportive of the troupe's shenanigans.

"I do appreciate when people say that they enjoy the shows," said Barker. "I take the feedback back to the actors who make it happen"

So far, everyone involved in the show has been fantastic, says Barker, especially the volunteers not appearing on stage that are making it happen.

There will be two performances of *The Art of Deception* at the Legion in Wilberforce. The first show, held on Saturday, April 11 has already sold out. Barker reports that there are still tickets available for their second and final performance held on April 12. Tickets can be purchased at Agnew's General Store or by Barker directly.

For the rest of the year, Barker says that their fans are going to have to wait for their next performance. With the upcoming municipal election, the troupe will not have a space to host their shows.

"I've got something else on the back burner," said Barker.

Stay tuned for their next performance in Spring 2027.

Scott Stewart, a professional lacrosse player and Minden local, will be back to offer the Canadian sport to kids in the community once again. The past few seasons have been met with a warm response by local families. /submitted

County kids lacrosse continues to grow

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

While many may assume that the national sport in Canada is hockey, they may not realize that Canada officially has two sports that hold that position.

Hockey takes the title for the winter, but lacrosse is Canada's official summer sport.

And its popularity is snowballing at a local level.

Minden-based Scott Stewart is going into his third year as the coordinator of Raven Lacrosse, a nine-week program designed to give kids four weeks of instruction and drills, and five weeks of games.

Hosted in both Minden and Haliburton, the program aims to introduce a new sport to the region, for kids between the ages of nine and twelve. "Before I started Raven Lacrosse, there were no opportunities for kids to play lacrosse here," said Stewart. "I started this program not only so kids would have the chance to play lacrosse, but also to broaden the number of opportunities for kids to be active in the county."

Stewart is no stranger to the sport. While his first sport was hockey at the age of three, his father introduced lacrosse just a few years later. "I always loved lacrosse because it felt more freeing than hockey," said Stewart. "It wasn't as serious to me, and there wasn't the same pressure to perform. At the same time lacrosse was a great compliment to hockey. I played hockey in the winter and lacrosse in the summer. It's great for conditioning, hand-eye coordination and it's a lot of fun."

For the next ten years, Stewart dove into the sport full force. He became an All-Star in Junior A Lacrosse, played for the Nationals in Vancouver, for Team Canada in Australia, and was awarded Most Valuable Player and Rookie of the Year in the Ontario Lacrosse Association.

By the time he was 20, he had earned a full scholarship to Drexel University in Philadelphia, and in the same year, was drafted third overall to the Anaheim Storm. From 2002-2012, he played professional lacrosse in the National Lacrosse League (NLL) in the United States and Canada, during which time he was named one of the top 50 players in the league.

"I've learned a lot about lacrosse over the years and wanted to bring that knowledge to the community," said Stewart. "Since there was no local lacrosse when I started, it seemed like a perfect fit to start building the sport in Haliburton."

The program was met with an abundance of interest when it was introduced locally, with full teams in both 2024 and 2025. This year, the program takes place on Tuesdays from April 28 to Tuesday June 30. There will be two groups, separated by age, with each group practicing for one hour per week at a cost of $250 per child for the entirety of the season.

The first four weeks will focus on cradling, passing, catching, shooting the ball and the rules of the game. The next five weeks will be playing games with some focused instruction on details like face-offs and strategy at the beginning of each game.

While the equipment needs are a little lighter than hockey, a helmet, gloves, a lacrosse stick, clean running shoes, and arm guards are required. "Since lacrosse was a new sport in Haliburton, it meant starting from scratch with getting lacrosse equipment like nets and balls that would normally be provided with an arena rental," said Stewart. "In 2024 Tim Horton's sponsored these items. Kids also had to buy lacrosse equipment out of town since it wasn't sold locally. This year, Delancey Sports has stepped up and offered to provide a discount to Raven Lacrosse Program participants for their lacrosse equipment needs."

But as the sport continues to grow in popularity, Stewart wants to elevate the experience for the participants. "Going forward, if we want to create an authentic lacrosse experience here at home, we need to buy a shot clock and jerseys for the ten hours of game time we'll be playing," he said, noting that the costs for these net around $2,500. "Similar to basketball, a shot clock is necessary for games - when a player gains possession of the ball, they have eight seconds to run it over half and then 22 seconds to shoot on net before the ball is turned over to the other team. The cost is $1,000 and we'd be thrilled to have individuals or businesses step up to help us get a shot clock."

With the jerseys coming in at $1,500, Stewart hopes that some community support may aid in the purchasing of the team shirts for the participants.

He also confirmed that the league is seeking volunteer coaches, timekeepers, and lacrosse goalies for the five weeks of games from May 28 to June 30. To donate or volunteer, you can reach Stewart through the Raven Lacrosse Facebook page, or by calling 416-735-9564.

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Greater good

SOMETIMES THINGS just don't make sense.

That's okay.

Not everything is black and white. In fact, I'd say the majority of the world resides in a murky grey area I like to refer to as "the unknown".

It's a middle ground between left and right, right and wrong.

A place where we exist while we gather information, sort our thoughts. Most people are fairly comfortable laying in this state of relative limbo. And while certain thoughts and practices push and pull us towards either end of the spectrum, for the most part, we live in the middle.

Because the middle is where the greater good benefits. Left and right, right and wrong. It's where colours are blurred, and lines aren't defined.

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

This week, I witnessed two examples of this in real time.

The first one was at a business stakeholder meeting. A number of short term rental (STR) representatives were fired up about the municipal accommodation tax (MAT); a recent implementation targeting registered STR providers that goes towards municipal and county-wide tourism initiatives.

I saw it again when the official spring fire ban was put into place by the chiefs across the county. No daytime burning, even amongst a foot of snow. And again, social media spiralled.

These are two examples of situations where the outcome likely could have been solved by more information up front. Why are STR providers the only tourism drivers dinged with a tax? Where does the money go once it's collected? What are some tangible samples of areas where this project has succeeded? How do we, as a community, benefit?

For the fire ban: why isn't the ban put off until the snow seeps into the soil? Is there no wiggle room for brush burns and maple syrup production? What is the reasoning behind the arbitrary dates set? And again, how do we, as a community, benefit?

This is where the representatives flying these flags of policy need to be able to show up. It can't just be an us versus them mindset; a skewed teacher/student dynamic of *this is how it is so don't ask questions.*

There needs to be information. Town halls. Opportunities for questions. Council conversations. Room for listening. Space for sharing.

But on the flip side, both of these initiatives float in the abyss of the unknown. And while the general public struggles to connect the dots of reason, they have both been proven to benefit the greater good.

In other municipalities, the MAT is used to directly promote, support, and showcase the events and experiences of a community; putting it on the map as a key tourist attraction, and elevating its presence in ways that wouldn't be possible without additional revenue. In the big picture, it benefits the greater good.

The fire ban has already prevented grass fires from spreading. While the ground seems saturated, fire doesn't always need a perfect condition to grow and lick away at the world. Prevention is key. In the big picture, it benefits the greater good.

I'm not saying either one of these initiatives was rolled out flawlessly. It's good to ask questions, to connect the dots, to try to navigate the murky waters of the unknown. Left and right, right and wrong.

But let's not forget about the big picture; our place as a tiny speck in a big, beautiful world, and how we all need to remember that we're just one piece of the puzzle in that big picture.

Look out for scammy CAPTCHA lookalikes

HAVE YOU ever been in a hurry to log into a website and were then presented with the seemingly interminable task of finding all the motorcycles in a grid of photographs? Or maybe you were just asked to click a checkbox next to the phrase, "I am not a robot." Or perhaps you had to wait through a loading screen telling you to hold on while something confirmed you are a human. In all these cases, you were interacting with a CAPTCHA.

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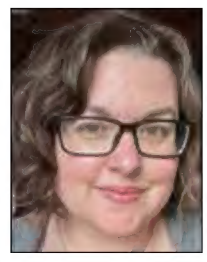


Techonology

Humans &

Erin Kernohan-Berning

A CAPTCHA uses a number of strategies to verify that you are a human. This can include having the user do a task that is difficult for a computer to do, such as picking those motorcycles out of a series of grainy street photos, typing words that are presented with distorted text, or simply interacting with a checkbox or screen while the CAPTCHA checks your browsers cookies to see if your browsing behaviour looks more human than not.

While a CAPTCHA can serve a legitimate function, scammers are increasingly using fake CAPTCHA interfaces to fool people into installing malware. This tactic relies on a phenomenon called verification fatigue – where we get so accustomed to the annoyance of having to go through yet another step to login to a website that we just say yes to everything without really paying attention.

Fake CAPTCHAs often ask the user to do something that no real CAPTCHA would do. There are three main types of legitimate CAPTCHAs that you would see on a website:

- Type words that are presented to you with distorted text.
- Choose, match or slide pictures of common objects.
- Check a box declaring yourself to be a human.

There are also invisible CAPTCHAs that don't require your interaction and just run in the background.

A fake CAPTCHA will often ask for you to press a series of keys on your keyboard, like Windows Key + R, or Ctrl + V, in order to trick you into running a command. Others might ask you to scan a QR code that results in malware being downloaded to your device. A real CAPTCHA will never ask you to do these things. If you're not picking streetlights out of a lineup, transcribing a very wavy looking word sequence, ticking a box or sliding a puzzle-piece, then it's not a real CAPTCHA.

Websites with fake CAPTCHAs are often arrived at by people clicking on malicious links in their email, misspelling a URL when typing a frequently visited site into their browser, or accidentally clicking on a scam ad on a legitimate website. Fake CAPTCHAs rely on us being in a hurry, and when we are rushing to get something done, we don't always pay full attention to what our screens are presenting to us. This is why it's very important to pause, read, and think when our devices are telling us to do something.

If you encounter a fake CAPTCHA, close your browser. Often at that point you likely don't recall how you arrived at the offending page, so best just end your browsing session and start again. When you do navigate back through the websites you were visiting, be cautious. It can be difficult to discern whether a website is still harbouring malicious ads – ad networks can and do catch these scams, but it can take some time for a compromised website to be safe again.

If you are in a situation where you have interacted with a fake CAPTCHA (you followed the instructions and inadvertently installed malware) run a scan with your computer's antivirus or a malware removal program like MalwareBytes, or have your computer checked out by a person you trust. Make sure all of the online services you use have two-factor authentication set up – that way if any of your login information was captured, at least you have that extra layer of protection in case someone does try and break into your accounts.

Legitimate CAPTCHAs can be annoying, but the fact that scammers are impersonating them makes them a little bit scary. Know the differences between the real and fake ones, take your time when presented with instructions online, and you'll be fine. The same way we look both ways before we cross the road, being diligent about what we are doing online is all part of living in a digital world.

points of view

Fire the groundhogs

LOOK, I don't want to be one of those people who tells someone else how to do their job. Having said that, I believe it is high time that the people whose job it is to predict when spring will arrive should fire the groundhogs that are working for them.

(Full disclosure: It's true. I have been bluff charged and treed by several groundhogs over the course of a life well-lived. But that has not influenced this column.)

Their record speaks for itself.

Let's be honest. These groundhogs have one job and one job only – to predict whether we get six more weeks of winter, or less. And they are failing at it.

Who knows why? I'm sure the compensation is adequate. After all, they routinely make TV appearances.

Nor is it a particularly taxing job. They only work one day a year. That means they have ample opportunities to build social media followings and do podcasts. Let's not even talk about the lettuce endorsements.

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

Their job description isn't too daunting either. Pop your head out of a hole. Briefly look at your shadow. Make a quick guess – one in which you have a 50 per cent chance of being correct. Return to the comfort of your hole.

A formal education is not required to enter the profession. You just need to be willing to work one day a year with a man who wears a top hat.

Regardless, it seems as if they are mailing it in.

It's obvious that these groundhogs are not taking the job seriously. If they had been, I wouldn't have spent all that time yesterday putting away my shorts.

Between you and me, I'm astounded that we put any stock at all into the prognostications of rodents at all. I don't want to be dismissive, but we need to acknowledge that groundhogs come from the same family of animals who have still not figured out the mouse trap or the hamster wheel. Yet here we are asking them to predict complicated weather patterns?

Does this make sense?

No.

Also, why should we even trust groundhogs?

They make their livings pilfering from our gardens or crop fields. We sometimes shoot at them to discourage this. They have all the motive in the world to steer us wrong. As they have, once again, this year.

In fairness, we have not exactly set them up to succeed. I mean, do they even get annual performance appraisals or professional development opportunities at work? My guess is no.

The truth is, we don't even provide them with annual eye examinations. So, how can we be sure that they can even see their own shadows?

Lastly, you need to ask yourself why, in 2026, this remains a male-dominated profession?

My research (yes, I research these columns,) shows that there are 93 named prognosticating groundhogs. Of those, only 17 are female. And I defy anyone to name one.

My point is, the whole profession needs to be overhauled. Standards need to be put in place. Training needs to happen. The world also needs to see that the profession is making an effort to keep up with the times.

The quickest way to do that is to give those female groundhogs a chance. If you ask me, they've spent way too much time in the shadows.

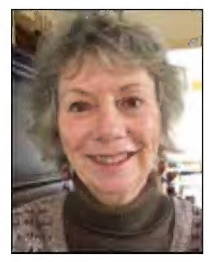
pic *of the* past

Lake trout caught by Len Herron in Drag Lake June 4, 1961, 37 inches long, 22 pound 3 ounces, girth 22. Caught on Williams medium silver spoon .010 Duro-Los line. /FILE

A different kind of sky

MONIKA WONDERED how long this could continue. Another morning, another nighttime snowfall. It meant more shovelling, a wet floor by the door and arms that were so tired of hoisting heavy white stuff up and over the forever snowbanks. With Easter just around the corner, it was discouraging.

Sitting at her kitchen table sipping that essential first cup of coffee, she questioned how all the white stuff would ever leave her yard. Like a tricky mountain, it would recede for a day or two but then – bang – the sky would open up with another load and a new, fresh arrival would weigh down the trees and put an ache in her back.



Our road

Down

Sharon Lynch

The phone rang. Her neighbour Jim was driving into town and wondered if she needed anything. "How about some spring?" she asked as he chuckled on the other end of the line. To lift her spirits he told her he'd bring her a butter tart from the corner bakery. She'd need the sugar to keep up her energy for all the shovelling that lay ahead.

Jim had a snowblower until last week when it died. The local fix-it man was swamped with work and wouldn't be able to get to it for at least a week. So Monika, who usually benefited from Jim's generous snow-clearing efforts, had to resort to arm power instead. Sigh.

A couple of deer picked their way cautiously through the deep drifts at the back of the property. By now they were pretty hungry and tired of dealing with winter. Monika knew exactly how they felt. The birdfeeder hanging from the clothesline was almost invisible under all the white and Monika decided that was the first thing to clear before tackling her driveway. She knew late winter could be especially hard on exhausted wildlife.

Once outside, shovel in hand, she looked up at the low-hanging clouds and wanted to shake her fist heavenwards. Enough, she silently yelled. And then she went to work. After a while she got into a rhythm of bend, scoop, push and lift as she made her way back and forth across the driveway. The chickadees were appreciative of her efforts at the feeder and their cheery voices helped improve her mood. Then, wonder of wonders, a breeze picked up and overhead the clouds began to recede.

Once the sun came out, everything changed. Instead of being surrounded by a monochrome world, there was blue above and sparkles below. Grey and red squirrels scurried from their snow tunnels, scavenging what they found under the feeder. A blue jay called from the poplar and now life didn't seem quite so overwhelming.

When the driveway was cleared – at least for now – Monika heard Jim's truck round the corner. Stepping out of his vehicle, he suggested a coffee would go well with the butter tarts he had brought.

As the syrupy sweetness threatened to run down her chin, Monika mused that at least all that fell from their skies was snow. It could be a lot worse.

letters to the editor

Thanks to community

To the Editor,

After 23 years of loving our community, we have sold our cottage and wish to extend a fond farewell and thank you all for your graciousness, humility, integrity and welcoming manner:

- Lake neighbours for their outstanding support and friendship
- Staff at Eagle Lake Country Market for their tremendous customer service and Team Foodland
- Staff at Sir Sam's Ski and the Inn, who bring such joy and economic contribution to the county.
- Country Pickins, Country Rose, and all the retailers served us so well through the years
- HHHS volunteers, medical teams and staff who provide such excellent care (especially during COVID); they are all dancing with Angels!
- Men and women at Hydro, Bell, the Roads Department and others who have kept us warm, safe, and connected.
- Staff, and especially the talented volunteers at Canoe FM (Who can ever forget Pet Detective!), *The Echo* (A must-read if you wish to "be in-the-know" about all things Haliburton!) and the Moose FM team.
- Dedicated and hard-working local Politicians and the County staff who provide necessary services, including the friendly staff at West Guilford and Haliburton waste disposal sites
- OPP and Fire Department members and volunteers who give so much to keep us safe
- Friends at hunt/fishing camp who provide wonderful camaraderie and adventure.
- St. Anthony congregation who welcomed us with open arms as well as all the other charitable organizations that support those in need.

The many volunteers that organize community events/games, charitable works, arts/ theatre programs and much more.

The BRG who made it possible for one goodbye and another hello for a new family

To all those we have forgotten to mention.

Best wishes, goodbye, and Godspeed.

Martha and Rick Blickstead,
Toronto

Reconsider crosswalks

To the Editor,

Re: Proposed crosswalk sparks debate

March 31, 2026 issue of *The Times* has a very interesting article written by Thomas Smith regarding a proposed crosswalk on Bobcaygeon Road.

I have some serious concerns with this proposal and are as follows:

- The alley way would barely allow for a stroller or wheelchair to pass through this narrow alley way despite accessibility being a priority
- During winter months there is ice that slides off the roof overhangs which could injure the public and be a liability for the Township, as noted this year with caution signs posted
- During the winter months this alley way does not receive adequate maintenance by the township
- Parking spots along this section of Bobcaygeon Road are prime areas especially for elderly who frequent the shops and will impact directly on the economy of the local businesses
- When exiting on the north side one enters directly into the parking lot for Coneybeare's Butcher Shop, which is busy most days

In my opinion, remove the cross walk at CIBC and replace the one at Water Street with a proper crosswalk. This would also improve the flow of vehicular traffic by having pauses in moving vehicles to allow right turns off Water Street and left turns off Bobcaygeon. A win-win for all.

I am respectfully asking all to reconsider the decision to place a crosswalk along the middle of Bobcaygeon Road in downtown Minden.

Regards,

Anne Stephens,
Minden

Letters to the Editor note: Submissions are subject to editing for newspaper style and punctuation.

Out and About in Haliburton

Dear readers,

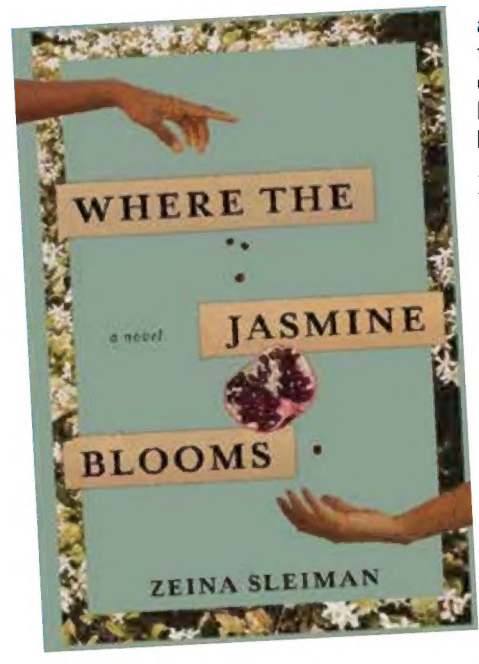
It is rare I find myself anywhere without a sketchbook, especially if I am in a space where there's people and I know I have some time to kill. One of these times occurred when I was waiting on my daughter during her hair appointment at the Noble Barber. As I sketched Sydney in the Barber's chair, I had an idea: what if I did a series of sketches/illustration that documented life and activity in the Haliburton Highlands? Not only could this help advertise local businesses but it brings attention to the positive things happening in our community and those who are making a difference. I have always loved the power of an image to tell a story; I hope this will be one of many as I venture out and about in Haliburton County.

Submitted by Tamara Holman

Snarling Pine Marten by Tammy Nash

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Book of the Week



In 2006, Yasmine arrives in Lebanon after a messy divorce, searching for the family and identity her mother kept hidden during their life in Toronto. Meeting her cousin Reem for the first time - who lives in a refugee camp and teaches Arabic - Yasmine is pulled into a world far different from her own. But when a package of letters suggests her father may still be alive, the two uncover political secrets their family would rather keep buried.

As questions of belonging deepen, Yasmine and Reem must rely on each other while navigating grief, displacement, and the lasting impact of war, set against the vivid backdrop of Lebanon's beaches and cities.

Where the Jasmine Blooms by Zeina Sleiman is available to borrow from the Haliburton County Public Library. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

A new path for trailblazing

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Kate Campbell, centre, will be stepping into the role of host for the upcoming season of *Trailblazing Talks*. The show aims to feature individuals from across the country who have made significant contributions to media, sports, and politics. /submitted

Kate Campbell has never been one to shy away from a new opportunity.

The Haliburton native, who now calls Toronto home, has been heavily immersed in the world of television, movies, and screenwriting for years. Appearing in the Oscar-nominated film *Gone Girl,* and nominated for a Maverick Movie Award for best-supporting actress for her role in the feature film *Badsville,* Campbell's most recent project has been the highly successful *Trailblazing Talks,* a television show and podcast that's been airing since 2025.

The show was hosted by Dini Petty, a renowned Canadian television and radio host, with the premise revolving around interviews with established 'trailblazers' across the country.

After two seasons of success, the show is switching gears, and Campbell will be officially sitting in the host chair as they jump into season three. "It's all very exciting," said Campbell during a recent phone interview. "It feels quite natural. It feels really aligned at this time."

Campbell is no stranger to show itself. As the executive producer and showrunner for the series, she also directed a number of episodes. When the show made the shift from television to podcast format last year, Campbell realized how many opportunities could be available. "It feels like podcasts are so much more accessible," she said. "They're everywhere now. It's a great information sharing place, and allows for more flexible booking windows with guests."

While Campbell has always been passionate about the project, bringing her to the forefront from her backstage roots felt like the right fit at the time. She shared that original host Dini Petty had noted that she was ready to step aside, and Campbell, who lived and breathed the project, was a natural fit for the role. "I'm comfortable both in front of and behind the camera," she laughed. "So it feels pretty seamless."

Through the changes, the theme has always been the same: celebrating 'trailblazers and changemakers' through their own stories. "It's about people really doing great things in the world," said Campbell. "I am very attuned to the idea of legacy, and how we can give back. I want to be having these conversations where that is more visible." The show will be produced by Campbell, along with executive producer Marina Cordoni, who has worked around the world on film, television, and storytelling projects.

And Campbell believes that everyone has a story to tell. "We all have our own brand of magic," she said. "And based on lived experiences, that lands differently."

Some of the guests for this season include Camila Gonzalez a TSN sports reporter, with her new series *Game & Glory* airing ahead of the FIFA 2026 World Cup, Matt Kenny, a former hockey player and openly gay athlete, sharing his journey in the wake of the *Heated Rivalry* fever, Chris Mathers, a former undercover RCMP officer who infiltrated high-level drug trafficking and money laundering networks, and Kirstine Stewart, a Canadian media executive, former Head of Canada for Twitter and former executive vice president at CBC. And this is just the beginning.

The weekly podcast will officially kick off the first week of April. Campbell noted that her style for interviews straddles the line between investigative and conversational, making the show educational, informative, and entertaining. "I think as a host, my question style is a little different," she said. "I am very focused on legacy based storytelling."

Trailblazing Talks is available on any format you listen to podcasts.

Sat Apr 11th
Doc(k) Day 2026
10:00 I AM THE ART: NOBUO KUBOTA CANADA 85 min
1:30 CLAIRTONE CANADA 73 min
3:30 WE LEND A HAND
THE FORGOTTEN STORY
OF ONTARIO FARMERETTES CANADA 49 min
7:30 THE ART OF ADVENTURE CANADA 90 min
Q&A with Alison Reid, Director
Robert Bateman and Bristol Foster
thoseothermovies.com ALL-DAY PASS $35
Limited tickets, $10 at the door, starting 9 am
ALL-CANADIAN INSPIRING TALES

April showers

Despite drizzly weather, Easter events took place across the County this past weekend, with Abbey Gardens hosting their annual games and egg hunts. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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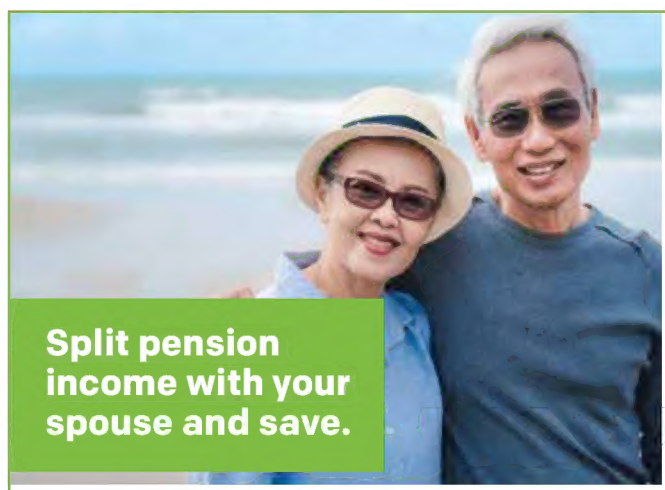

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Hop into history

The Minden Hills Cultural Centre opened their doors this past Saturday for an Easter in the Village event, with stories, crafts, and of course an Easter egg hunt around the property. /TIM YANO staff photographer

STR hosts share process; 'not a smooth ride'

from page 1

to 168.

With the newly implemented Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) that has recently been tacked onto accomodators across the County, McCaw noted that by the end of 2025, $41,329.14 had been collected. These taxes are to go directly towards municipal-related initiatives, as permitted under MAT legislation. Half of the MAT revenue is designed to go towards the upper-tiered Municipal Services Corporation, which was established by the County of Haliburton to specifically go towards tourism initiatives at a larger local level.

At the time of the meeting, no funding had been spent at the lower-tier level, and has been placed in reserves to be used at the discretion of councillors.

As for licensing fees to the STR program, McCaw noted that the township has collected $55,773.85 over the past year, which is used to support administration and support costs.

Elizabeth Oakley stepped in as the first delegation for the meeting. "I want to sincerely thank all of you for doing, what so far, no other council in Haliburton has chosen to do, which is to take a pause, examine how the first year of the STR bylaw implementation has gone, including what works, what doesn't, and with the hope that through consultation and feedback, a more reasonable and less onerous STR program will be created," she said.

Oakley, an STR host based out of Highlands East, shared that the bylaw "has not been a smooth ride," with mistakes made "from the very beginning."

"With respect, Scott Ovell (the director of Economic Development for the County of Haliburton) sold you a false bill of goods," she said, "saying the average yearly accommodation of STR hosts here sits at 65 per cent. This is an outrageous exaggeration of the truth."

Oakley went on to ask about which projects are underway for the funds raised through the taxation, and rang the bell of concern about the online map shared featuring AirBnB hosts on the municipal website, which was posted without the consent of the hosts. "Big, big, big privacy issues there," she said. "We demand transparency on the STR by-law. Lay everything out on the table for everyone to see."

Oakley said that she feels Highlands East council was led astray in the process of implementing the MAT. "When council was presented with the possible income that the municipalities could earn, members were quick to jump on board," she said. "However it doesn't take a PhD in mathematics to ascertain that Haliburton County officials misled Highlands East councillors. The earnings have not and will not materialize to the amounts promised."

Oakley presented a number of suggestions to the bylaw, including a tiered approach to fees, a MAT reduction to two per cent (down from four per cent in Highlands East), and removing shoreline road allowance purchases as criteria for licensing. "It should be a collaboration, not a dictatorship," she said.

Highlands East Mayor Dave Burton responded by saying that the council meeting was for "fact finding and compiling all the information," noting that it was likely another meeting would be called in the future to discuss further.

Chris Williams, the president of the Minnicock Lake Cottagers Association, took to the floor to voice his thoughts on the current STR regulations in place. Out of the 55 cottages on the lake, seven are presently STRs. "Enforcement protects the value of the license for well managed STRs," said Williams. "There are well managed STRs out there that are doing a really good job."

Williams made the suggestion that the municipality work more closely with lake associations, to compile a list of registered STRs, and to limit the number of licenses per lake. He suggested focusing the MAT revenue on license participation until the system is stronger.

A number of locals approached the microphone at the meeting, voicing their concerns around the administrative process for attaining licensing for STRs, perceived invasions of privacy through the online map, and additional concerns around limiting opportunities for STR operators.

"I'm going to probably request another meeting," closed Mayor Burton. "We're going to get a staff review of some of the stuff that's been said today, and I am very willing to look at the bylaw. We understand that it does need a bit of tweaking, and we will certainly do that."

The science of happiness

Can we use scientific information to develop habits of happiness for ourselves, our families, and to build better and stronger communities? That is the topic that will be discussed by Peter Smith at the April Community Coffee House taking place on Monday, April 13 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Schofield Room of the Haliburton Legion, at 719 Mountain St., Haliburton.

Peter, through his careers in change management, education, and business, has studied brain-based research, change management and learning-styles theories. He will share aspects of these studies and their application from is working and volunteer careers.

Well-known local musician Jeff Moulton will open the evening with his distinctive and engaging style which has earned him recognition locally and internationally.

These Community Coffee House gatherings are open to all, at no admission fee, with light refreshments available. They are hosted by the Baha'i community of Haliburton County, offering live music and presentations to inform and inspire, and providing a space for discussions about how we can make our communities better places.

For further information, please call 416-606-9657.

Submitted

Kids talk environment with Razz

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

In April, the importance of environmental activism and community cleanups comes to the forefront, as the last piles of winter seep into the ground.

And Razzamataz Kids' Shows aims to start the conversation around the environment at an early age.

For their final offering of the season, the not-for-profit children's theatre group will be presenting *Earth, Seas and Air,* a show by Juno nominated artist, Chris McKhool. "The show is interactive, encouraging audience members to sing, dance and have fun while discussing how we can all care for the Earth," said advertising officer for Razzamtaz, Andrea Lithgow-Allen. "The audience is welcome to join Chris and his band after the show for a complimentary music workshop sharing rhythm and grooves from over a dozen global music styles."

The performance concludes this season for Razz, which has offered a number of both public and in-school performances for students across the County. "Throughout this season, we have presented a variety of shows from companies across Canada, ranging from ballet, contemporary and Indigenous hoop dance, to puppetry and physical theatre," said Lithgow-Allen. "These shows have been a wonderful opportunity for families in our community to engage with a diverse array of high quality theatre and professional artists."

Over the years, Razzamataz has been committing to aiding in accessibility to the many shows they bring to the community. One way they have completed this outreach has been by partnering with the elementary schools across the county, to offer daytime performances to the students.

"For the last number of seasons, we have been endeavouring to secure funding for additional in-school performances and/or workshops in order to bring theatre experiences to a wider audience of children across our far-stretching county," said Lithgow-Allen. "We have one more performance scheduled in June, to be presented at the Northern Lights Pavilion to Stuart Baker Elementary School students in Grades 1 to 3. This is a special show from Indigenous hoop dancer Makehna made possible by funding from Prologue for the Performing Arts and Parents for French."

While this season may be winding down, Lithgow-Allen confirmed that the Razz committee is already well underway in preparing for the next season. "Our 2026/2027 season will commence in September, with another programme of four unique shows," she said. "There will be music, magic, puppets and more."

Earth, Seas and Air will be at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion on April 12 at 2 p.m. For more information or to secure tickets, visit www.razzamataz.ca.

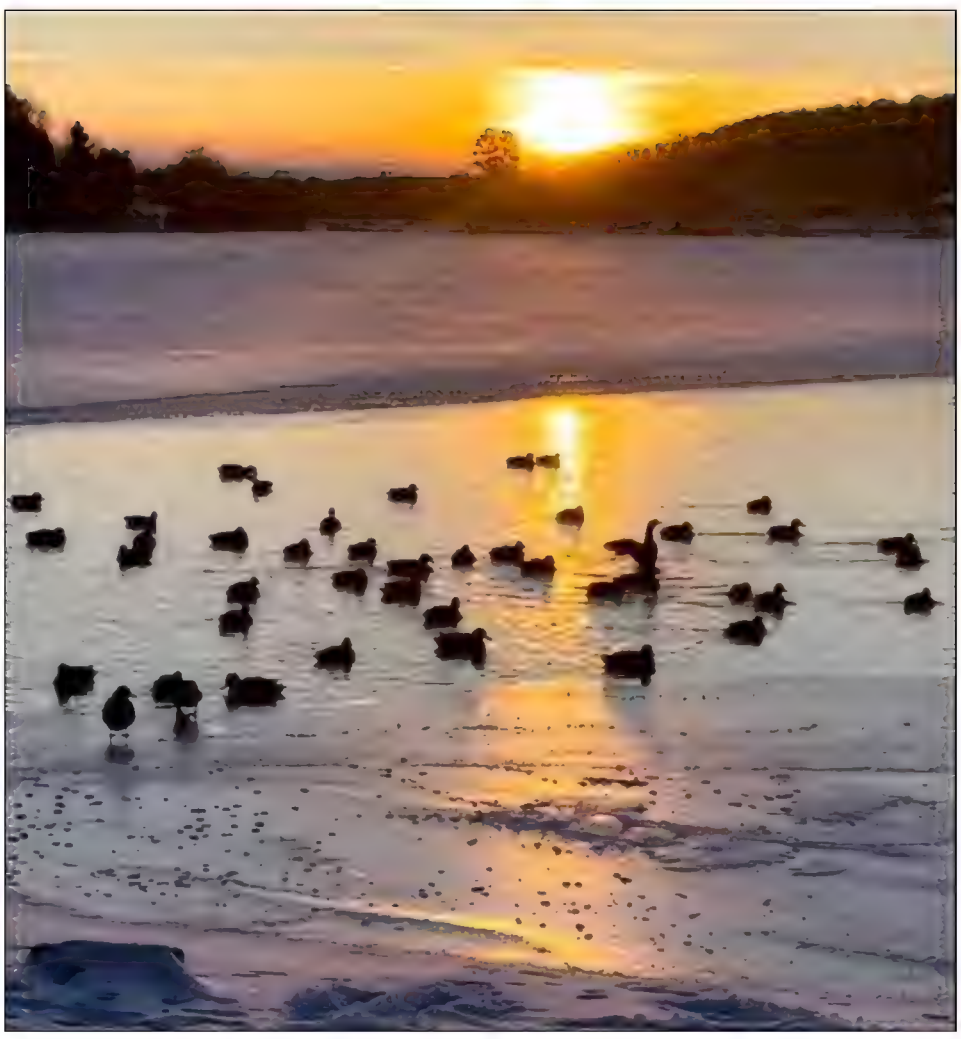
Chris McKhool will be presenting Earth, Seas, and Air as a part of the Razzamataz lineup this weekend. /submitted

Ice Out returns

It's that time of year again!

For decades now, our newspaper has hosted their annual Ice Out contest, where we ask the community to guess the official date that all ice will be melted from Head Lake. The winner of the contest will receive one full year subscription to the *Haliburton Echo* or the *Minden Times.*

Send your best guesses to emily@haliburtonpress.com for a chance to win. Good luck!



NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
PROPOSED ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT
TO ZONING BY-LAW 2005-120 OF THE
MUNICIPALITY OF DYSART ET AL

- **DATE:** **Tuesday, April 28, 2026**
- **TIME:** **9:05 AM**
- **LOCATION: Take notice that the public meeting for zoning by-law amendment will take place in Council Chambers in the Municipal Office 135 Maple Avenue, Haliburton, Ontario and in electronic format using Zoom. The meeting will be live streamed to YouTube.**

Applications:

Lands of Norris – File No. D14-ZB-2026-005

Purpose and Effect: The proposed amendment would permit:

- Rezone a portion of the severed lands from the Rural Type 1 (RU1) Zone to the Waterfront Residential 4L (WR4L) Zone, ensuring the conveyed lands are zoned consistently with the benefiting lot to which they will be merged; and
- Rezone the retained lands from the Rural Type 1 (RU1) Zone to a Rural Type 1-XX (RU1-XX) Exception Zone to recognize the reduced lot area and lot frontage resulting from the severance.

Location: Civic Address – not assigned, legally described as Part Lot 6, Concession 10, in the Geographic Township of Dudley, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

Lands of Rushlow – File No. D14-ZB-2026-006

Purpose and Effect: The proposed amendment would rezone the subject property from the General Industrial (M) Zone to a General Industrial Exception Zone (M-XX) to permit the use of a Commercial School or Club (Gymnastics Facility).

Location: Civic Address – 367 Industrial Park Road, legally described as Part Lot 11, Concession 9, Part 17, Plan 19R-4878 in the Geographic Township of Dysart, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

For more information about electronic meetings and public participation in an electronic meeting, contact the Planning Technician at twilson@dysartetal.ca,.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS MATTER INCLUDING INFORMATION ABOUT APPEAL RIGHTS: Contact the Planning and Land Information Department by appointment during regular office hours (8:30 A.M-4:30 P.M, Monday to Friday), or by contacting Kris Orsan, Manager of Planning at korsan@dysartetal.ca.

Dated at the Township of Dysart, this 7th day of April 2026.

Kris Orsan, CPT,
Manager of Planning
Planning and Land Information
Municipality of Dysart et al
135 Maple Avenue, Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0
Phone: 705-457-1740 ext. 626
E-mail: korsan@dysartetal.ca

Haliburton Real Easy Ryders kicks off season

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

The Haliburton Real Easy Ryders are about to set out on their spring season. /FILE

The wind blowing over you, the burning of your legs as you earn your momentum, and gliding over hills.

That is the thrill of riding a bike in Haliburton County.

For Haliburton Real Easy Ryders Cycling Club's President LeeAnn Cruz, it is the camaraderie and the great roads of the County that allow her to get up early for a ride every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.

After moving from Mississauga, Cruz says that it did not take long for her to realize how navigable our roads are, and how beautiful the scenery is across Haliburton County for cycling.

After years of running, Cruz learned to love cycling for exercise after she tore her ACL.

There are many benefits to joining a cycling club over riding alone. With fellow riders, you have more support for mechanical assistance, security, safety, and access to help in an emergency.

With one route starting at the Lochlin Community Centre, riders can travel along the road to Kate's Burger Counter, stop in and enjoy a coffee, then loop back to Lochlin to complete their ride.

"We do a lot more than just ride our bikes," said Cruz.

The cycling club has two trips planned for this year. In June, there will be a trip to Goderich. In September, the club will be organizing a trip to Napanee. Spouses are welcome to join in on the adventure. During the day on these trips, club members will be riding and discovering the new areas. In the evening, there will be group dinners.

With many of the club's members being musically inclined, Cruz says that you can expect a sing-a-long and someone to pull out their instrument. One night is even dedicated for members to perform.

In the past, the club has even had line dancing lessons from club member Jackie Bell.

Members can also enjoy social events, like the three potluck lunches this season.

"The delicious dishes draw everybody in," said Cruz, with a laugh.

Membership to the Real Easy Ryders is open to riders of all skill levels and age.

"We try to welcome everyone and be as accommodating as we can," said Cruz.

Last year, the Real Easy Ryders boasted 132 members. That number includes local residents and a mix of seasonal attendees that join in on the fun.

Membership to join the riding club is $40. This fee goes to paying for their rentals, AGM, Ride with GPS, and insurance for the club.

Cruz is proud to say that the $40 membership fee has remained constant for the past five years.

Before officially becoming a member of the club, those interested can participate in a ride-along to see if they are wanting to commit to membership.

When joining for a race, riders will introduce themselves, talk about their skill level and will be paired with an experienced rider to help them get comfortable.

The club disperses at the beginning, splitting off into groups of similar experience and those wanting different challenges of ride.

Riders bike in single-file and will signal to each other for slowing down and turning to ensure safety and no crash pile-ups.

Members also get access to a Ride with GPS account which shows a map with the route. Those new to the area still often print maps out and bring them with them on their rides.

"We ride in rain and shine," said Cruz. "We leave it up to the members."

Confidence and skill should always be considered before deciding to cycle in the rain as it makes the road extra slippery, especially with sandy shoulders in the County.

The Real Easy Ryders will be hosting a Let's Get Rolling social event on Sunday, April 26 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Stanhope Firefighters Hall. Participants are encouraged to bring a reusable mug.

There will be talks on riding safety, guidelines, and Hywel Lee and Dave Paddock from Algonquin Outfitters will be in attendance to answer questions about maintenance and accessories.

The first group ride will be taking place on April 28. New this year, the departure time has been changed to the afternoon in May and October.

Whether you are wanting to hone your cycling skills, meet other people, or simply get exercise, the Haliburton Real Easy Ryders Cycling Club is for you.

If you are interested in becoming a member, or joining them for a ride, please visit their website haliburtonrealeasyryders.com.

Getting craft with library swap

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

With my fiancee learning how to crochet, we have an excess of a single colour of yarn in our house.

An excess of pink.

If only there was a way to bring some of her crafting supplies and swap it for a different colour.

With immense luck, the Haliburton County Public library will be collecting donations of crafting supplies up until April 10.

With spring cleaning on the way, don't throw out your unused crafting supplies - swap them!

"The goal of the spring craft supply swap is to bring the community together to share materials, spark creativity, and keep usable supplies out of the landfill," said Shawna Gamblen, programming and outreach coordinator for HCPL. "While helping people save money and try something new."

Gamblen says that ever since their Earth Day programming last year, and the excitement garnered from their Halloween costume swap, she has been wanting to host a crafting supply swap at libraries across the County.

With signs promoting the event, library goers have responded positively, returning to the library with boxes of gently used supplies for the swap.

"The reaction from the community has been incredibly positive. People have told us they think it's a great idea, and we've seen so much generosity," said Gamblen. "There's been a real sense of excitement around contributing and being part of something that helps others."

Another goal of the craft swap is to make crafting more accessible. Without the financial barriers of entry, people can try new crafting supplies and techniques and get inspired creatively.

"It's such a great fit for our community because it brings people together in a simple way around a shared goal of creativity, resource-sharing, and generosity," said Gamblen. "With the rising cost of living, having access to free materials can make a real difference in our area, whether you're passing along supplies you no longer need or discovering something new to create with, without the added expense."

Gamblen says that it is a small but impactful way to support others in the community.

There has been an impressive and eclectic assortment of supplies donated so far. From yarn, crochet, beading, paper, markers, scissors, there is something for everybody to be found at the craft supply swap.

"This is the perfect opportunity to stop in, take a peek, and see what inspires you," said Gamblen. "You might discover something new you wouldn't have tried otherwise."

Spring Craft Supply Swap events will be taking place at the Minden and Haliburton HCPL branches on Saturday April 18 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and at the Stanhope and Wilberforce branches from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Large tables that are organized by crafting supply category will be set up ensuring browsing ability. There are no fees associated with participating and everyone is welcome to stop in and take home what inspires them.

Creature Feature – the pileated woodpecker

RICK WHITTEKER

Guest Columnist

Close up Pileated Woodpecker. /photo by Ed Poropat

Now here is a bird I can identify without binoculars – it is hard to confuse for anything else! About the size of a crow, the pileated woodpecker is a striking bird with a fiery red crest, vibrant white strips along its neck and a sleek, black body. In flight, white patches flash under their wings – very eye-catching. Residing all winter in our mature forests, ecologists refer to the pileated as a keystone species.

A keystone species is a relatively uncommon species whose life cycle and behaviour benefits a disproportionately long list of other species and plays a critical roll in ecosystem function. Wolves are keystone species as are many other top predators around the world. The critical ecological role that the pileated woodpecker plays results from drilling holes in trees –often large, deep holes – which provide opportunities for other species to forage, nest and shelter.

Old woodpecker nests or excavated cavities are quickly occupied by "secondary cavity nesters" or wildlife that rely on tree cavities but don't have the capacity to make their own. These species include endangered bats, various duck species, many small owls, songbirds and mammals like flying and red squirrels, fisher and pine martens.

The pileated woodpecker is also an agent of change in our forests. Whacking at decaying logs and standing dead trees or snags, the holes they make open the tree up to quicker decay. Furthermore, their formidable beak carries with it various wood-decaying fungi. Moving that fungi around accelerates the decomposition process.

From a distance, pileated woodpeckers can be identified by the way they fly. The flight pattern is like a roller coaster; they flap their wings to rise and then glide and drop back down again. Very different from the steady wingbeat of crows, this undulating flight pattern distinguishes pileated woodpeckers for most other birds.

On guided hikes, I like to add a little levity to the discovery of the large, oval holes made by Canada's largest woodpecker. I explain that woodpeckers don't drill deep into trees only to exclaim, "bummer, there's nothing here!" The significant effort needed to bore deep into a tree is not a random act – woodpeckers have acute hearing and will confirm the presence of insects before excavating.

Carpenter ants make up a large portion of the pileated woodpecker's diet. These ants, unlike termites, do not eat wood but use trees and other wooden structures as nesting sites. If you see fine sawdust at the base of trees or inside tree cavities, this will confirm the presence of carpenter ants. These wood tailings are the byproduct of chewed out networks of tunnels and cavities called galleries. Pileated woodpeckers bore into these galleries and used their sticky, barbed tongues to extract the ants.

If you see bark strewn about at the base of snags, this is commonly the result of pileated woodpeckers seeking beetle grubs and other insects hidden under the bark. They also eat wild berries and nuts and will visit backyards in search of suet in the winter.

The sounds that pileated woodpeckers make are unmistakable. Their calls sound quite primordial –one call is a loud, rising and falling cackle that could easily be mistaken for a tropical rainforest species instead of a common, year-round resident of our woodlots.

If you consider the blend of spring bird, frog and toad calls as nature's symphony then woodpeckers would be the percussion section. Spring-time territorial drumming is an incredibly rapid hammering sound – up to twenty beats per second – used to attract a mate. Drumming is also a form of avian morse code spelling out clearly that, "this territory is taken!" to other competing woodpeckers. The louder the better; they drum on any available sound resonating object producing enough volume to be heard up to a kilometer away!

Once a mate is found, they stay close for life. They work together to chisel out a nesting site in March or April, share the incubating duties and take turns on the nest watching over the noisy clutch of hatchlings.

Large, standing dead trees and fallen logs are things that some property owners and forest managers may consider undesirable. Sustainable forest management in Ontario requires retaining a minimum of six snags per hectare. For landowners with no tree harvesting intentions, the more snags on your property the better as they don't impede regeneration, they offer a wealth of wildlife habitat and they transition to downed woody debris completing the forest nutrient cycle.

Easy to identify by sight or sound, pileated woodpeckers play a key role in forest ecology and are an important driver behind forest biodiversity in the Haliburton Highlands. So, if you hear a high-pitched cackle or loud drumming on your spring rambles, you know there is a VIP – a very important pileated – nearby.

WANTED

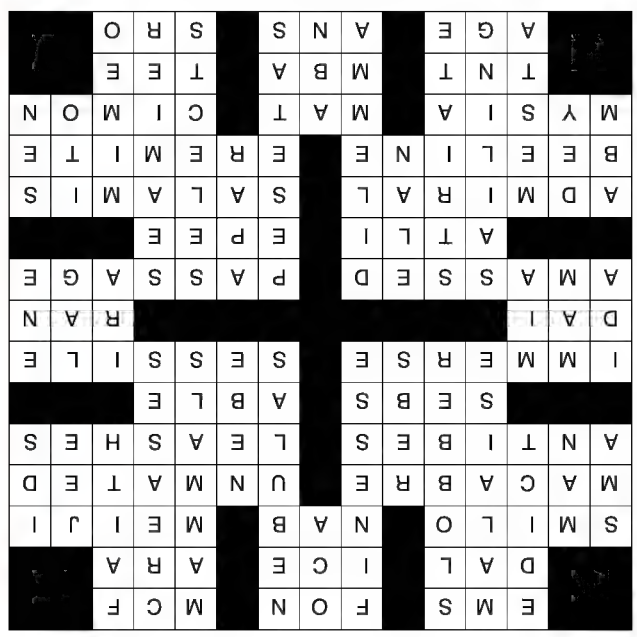
HISTORICAL PHOTOS FROM AROUND HALIBURTON COUNTY

Preferably from before 1970

Help revive our *Pic of the Past* section by sending in your pictures.

Bring them in to the Echo office at 146 Highland Street or email them to emily@haliburtonpress.com with dates and any other information.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS



SUDOKU SOLUTION

6	4	2	7	1	5	9	3	8
1	3	9	8	2	4	6	7	5
8	5	7	6	3	9	2	1	4
3	6	8	5	9	7	1	4	2
9	1	5	2	4	8	3	6	7
2	7	4	3	6	1	5	8	9
7	8	3	1	5	2	4	9	6
4	2	6	9	8	3	7	5	1
5	9	1	4	7	6	8	2	3

Grandparent fraud targeting local residents

The City of Kawartha Lakes Ontario Provincial police are warning residents about recent incidents involving the Grandparent Scheme, a fraud targeting seniors and vulnerable community members.

In these cases, victims receive a phone call from someone claiming to be a grandchild or relative in urgent distress. The caller often says they have been arrested, injured, or stranded and urgently need money for bail, legal fees, or travel expenses. Victims are typically instructed not to tell anyone and are pressured to provide money immediately, often through cash pickup, courier, gift cards, or electronic transfer.

Police have received reports of this scam occurring locally, residents are urged to remain vigilant.

How to protect yourself and your loved ones

Police are reminding the public to take the following precautions:

- Pause and verify - Hang up and contact the relative or another family member directly using a known phone number.
- Be suspicious of urgency - Fraudsters rely on fear and pressure to prevent victims from thinking clearly.
- Never send money or gift cards to someone you do not personally know or cannot independently verify.
- Do not share personal or financial information over the phone.
- Create a family code word that can be used to verify real emergencies.

What to do if you receive a call

- If you receive a call believed to be part of the Grandparent Scheme:
- Hang up immediately.
- Do not provide money or personal information.
- Report the incident to police, even if no money was lost.

• Reporting Fraud

Anyone who believes they have been targeted or victimized by fraud is encouraged to:

Contact the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) at 1-888-310-1122

Report the incident to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501 or online at www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca

Police continue to work with community partners to raise awareness and prevent further victimization. Residents are encouraged to share this information with family members, friends, and neighbours-particularly seniors.

Fraud prevention starts with awareness. When in doubt, hang up and check it out.

Submitted

Local Service Directory

MMP
MACMAR PLUMBING
Mackenzie Marshall
705-746-1939
macmarplumbing@gmail.com

KEGEL
HEATING & COOLING
Tim Kegel
Bus: 705-341-9170
Email: info@kegelheatingandcooling.ca
• Geothermal Systems
• Furnaces
• Fireplaces
• Hot Water Tanks
• Air Conditioning
• HRV's
• Radiant Floor Heating
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Take a bold icy plunge for a purpose

Jump in the Lake fundraiser returns to support Haliburton County

The Minden Community Food Centre and Central Food Network are inviting you to take bold action in the fight against food insecurity and poverty across the Highlands.

The Jump in the Lake Challenge returns this May long weekend, encouraging individuals and teams across Haliburton County to take a plunge into ice-cold water and raise funds in support of local charities.

Taking place on Saturday, May 16th at 2 p.m., this unique event allows participants to take the plunge from their own dock, shoreline, or favourite watering hole, making it easy for anyone to get involved - no matter where they are.

Tracey Gilbert, manager of the Minden Community Food Centre, and Tina Jackson, executive director of the Central Food Network, are challenging community members to step up, take the plunge, and help raise funds in support of their organization of choice.

"This event is a fun and meaningful way to bring people together while supporting a critical need in our communities," says Gilbert. "The rising cost of food and the increasing demand for support make it more important than ever that we come together to help our neighbours."

The Minden Community Food Centre served an average of 420 people each month in January and February of 2026. The Central Network served 241 individuals in January through its food banks in Wilberforce and Cardiff, and responded to 80 calls for heating and hydro support. As the need continues to rise, joining in creates a wave of impact, lending a helping hand to neighbours in need.

If jumping in the lake is not your thing, we invite you to jump into the fun by registering and setting your own bold challenge. That could be running a 5K, hosting a BBQ, organizing a knit-a-thon, hosting a live stream, or any other bold idea you can think of!

"Food and heat are necessities; your participation through Jump in the Lake makes a difference. Every dollar raised helps fuel the fight against hunger and poverty across Haliburton Highlands," Jackson says. "Together, we make our communities stronger."

Last year, the event raised a combined total of over $22,000, and organizers are setting an ambitious goal of $25,000 for 2026.

All proceeds will go directly toward supporting individuals and families across Haliburton County.

- Funds raised for the Minden Community Food Centre help to improve access to food and reduce the impacts of food insecurity throughout the region.
- Funds raised for the Central Food Network support all of CFN's programs, which include the Highlands East Food Banks in Cardiff and Wilberforce, Heat Bank Haliburton County's heating and hydro programs, free income tax clinics and more. Dollars raised help ensure no neighbour goes hungry or cold across the Highlands.

Participants can register as individuals or form teams to make the experience even more fun and impactful! Those who prefer to stay dry can still support the cause by donating to a participant or team.

Whether you take an icy plunge, set your own bold challenge, donate, or cheer others on, your support helps ensure that no one in our community goes without.

Get Involved

To register, donate, or learn more, visit the shared Haliburton County Food Bank website: www.foodbankshaliburtoncounty.ca/jump-in-the-lake

Questions, please reach out to either charity. We are happy to help!

Submitted

SIRCH community services

SIRCH Repair Café returns April 12

There's something satisfying about fixing what you already have.

SIRCH's Repair Café is back for the season - a place where neighbours help neighbours repair everyday items instead of throwing them away into the landfill.

Join us the second Sunday of every month from April to October, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the SIRCH Bistro & Bakery, 49 Maple Ave.

The highlights for April are:

- Landfill best practices presentation from Dysart at 11 a.m.
- Algonquin Outfitters once again will provide a bike clinic - Get your bike ready for spring with host Dave Paddock.

From small appliances to household items, volunteer fixers will do their best to help bring things back to life.

It's a simple way to save money, reduce waste, and connect with others in the community.

Bring something in need of repair - and see what's possible.

Submitted

Local Service Directory

CHAPMAN INSTALLATIONS
HALIBURTON, ON
TILE | NATURAL & VENEER STONE
LAMINATE | LVP | HARDWOOD
Jamie Chapman
Flooring Contractor
705-205-5078
chapmaninstallations0@gmail.com

Emmerson RENT-ALL
A division of Emmerson Lumber Limited
Visit our NEW website
emmersonrent-all.com
Phone: 705-457-1550
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63 Maple Ave., Haliburton
information@emmersonlumber.com
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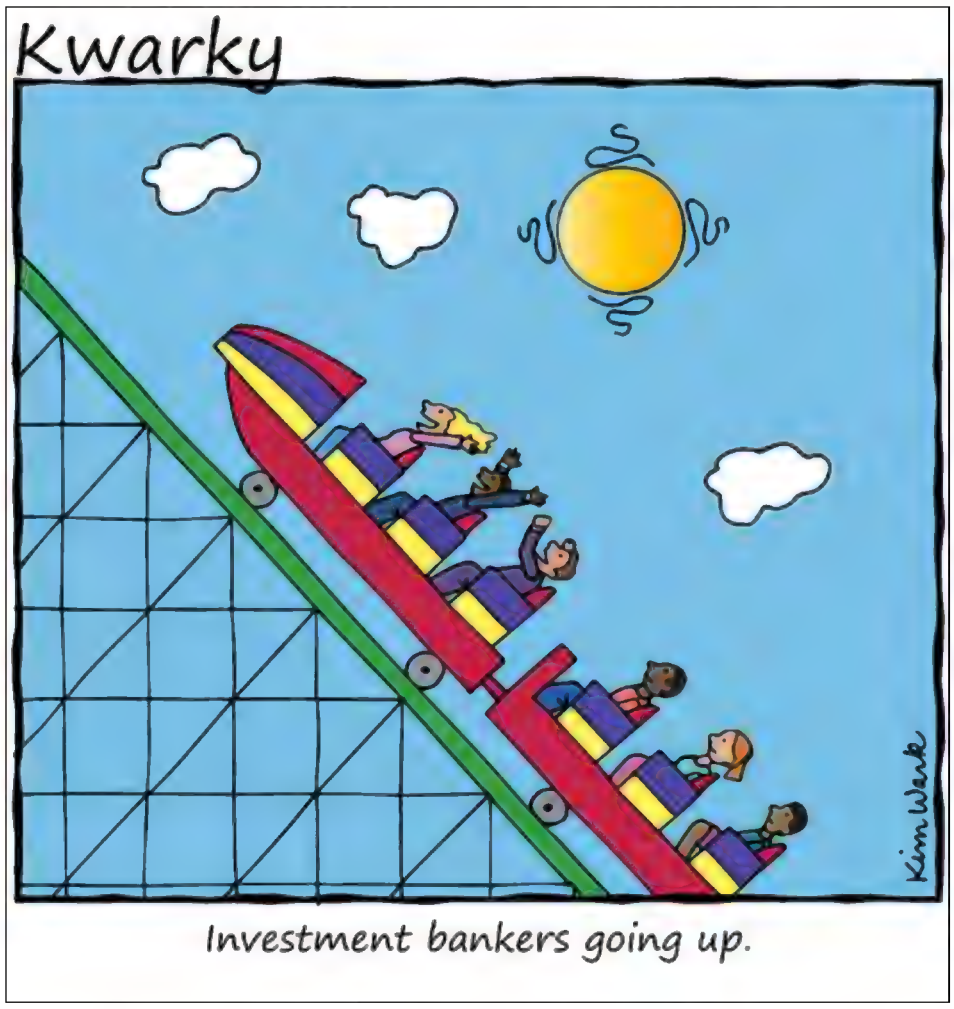
HOME IMPROVEMENT



Brought to you by

SUDOKU

		2	7			9	3	
	3				4	6		
8		7			9			4
							4	2
	1	5			8			
2				6	1			
	8	3						
						7	5	
				7				3

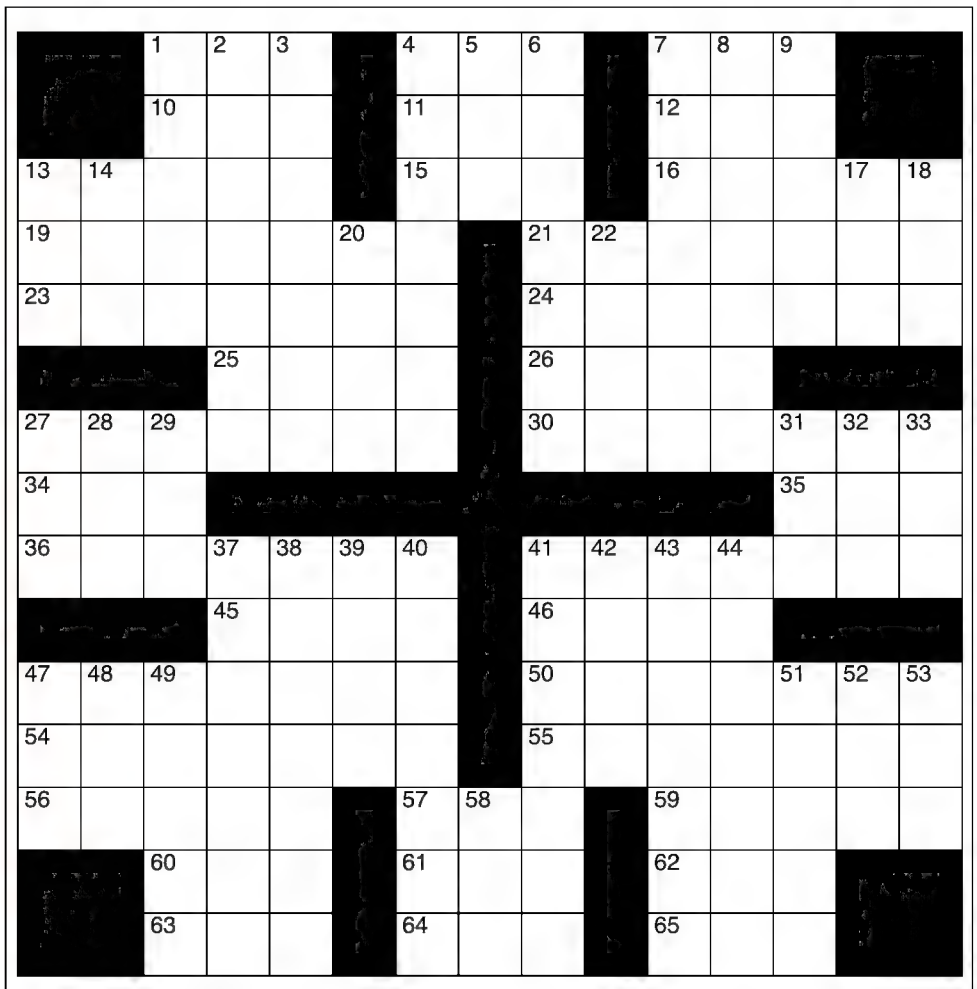
Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 15



CLUES ACROSS
1. Health care pros
4. A person inhabiting Benin
7. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
10. Split pulses
11. Frozen water
12. Small constellation
13. Perennial mountain rice
15. Pick up
16. Japanese historical period
19. Suggesting the horror of death and decay
21. Unattached
23. Fishing port in SE France
24. Products for dogs
25. One point south of southeast
26. Having the skill or resources to do something
27. Involve oneself deeply
30. Immobile
34. __ pai dong: Hong Kong food stall
35. Move quickly on foot
36. Gathered
41. A way through
45. Another name for Thor
46. Sharp dueling sword
47. The supreme commander of a fleet
50. Seasoned sausages
54. Path
55. Christian hermit
56. Ancient region of Asia Minor
57. Where wrestlers go to work
59. Roman statesman
60. Explosive
61. Licensed for Wall Street
62. Where golfers start
63. Grow old
64. Autonomic nervous system
65. No seats available

CLUES DOWN
1. A legally binding command
2. General feeling of discomfort
3. Dribble
4. Soft touch
5. South American plant
6. Clouds of gas and dust in space
7. Warm-blooded vertebrates
8. Lines created by folding
9. Strong belief
13. Senior officer
14. Adult
17. Joint entrance examination in India
18. Passports and drivers' licenses are two
20. Those who go against an accepted authority
22. One point east of northeast
27. Journalist Tarbell
28. OneÕs mother (British)
29. Nowhere to be found
31. A way to save for old age
32. Fall behind
33. Midway between northeast and east
37. The work of a sailor
38. Mark with striae
39. Energy, style and enthusiasm
40. Sticky situation
41. Monetary units of Spain
42. Three-banded armadillo
43. Chooses
44. More disreputable
47. Defensive nuclear weapon
48. "The Partridge Family" actress Susan
49. Livestock owners assn. in Spain
51. Duplicating machine (abbr.)
52. OJ trial judge
53. Politician
58. Airborne (abbr.)

Answers on page 15

Hal High Monthly

Hal High Monthly is written by the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School leadership class featuring monthy school news.

By: Nick Duszak, Viliya Ianovskaia, Tavia Harris, Leo Adam, Jed Joseph, Maddy Walker

As the 2025-2026 school year progresses further into the second semester, it is safe to say that student participation within non-academic activities have been increasing. This includes clubs, sports, elective classes, class challenges, and student-led events.

Recently, the leadership class has introduced a series of weekly class challenges. These challenges are to be completed during the first period of the day where teachers must submit student responses. During the first week of these challenges, students were tasked with trying to figure out who each leadership student was based on their baby photos, which many classes succeeded in. During the second week, students were assigned to figuring out the answers of two truths and a lie about teachers, which had also succeeded in an immense amount of participation (regarding teachers that engaged in the activity). During the third week, most recently, students were tasked with locating specific areas of the school based on very unsuspecting photos. Overall, this activity has succeeded participation wise and the leadership class will continue to provide these fun weekly challenges.

The week before March Break, the leadership class organized a lively Spirit Week filled with fun and creativity. It began with a florals and patterns day, where students wore bright, colourful spring outfits. The next day featured a spring and St. Patrick's Day bake sale, where students decorated their own sugar cookies and nearly sold out. On Thursday, everyone wore green, turning the school into a sea of clovers. Friday was a cozy day, with students wearing pajamas and bringing their favourite stuffed animals. During lunch, cornhole was set up in the cafeteria, where two students played the entire time and won most of the chocolate coin prizes.

Local students share that the pride in the high school is growing, and continues to support their fellow students and teachers. /submitted

Going into the second semester of the 2025-2026 school year, the Chess Club has had higher expectations. This year, there have been goals set to try to have more tournaments compared to the previous years. In addition to this, Chess Club has also been advertised a lot more through announcements almost every morning. These two factors have greatly contributed to the growing participation of students in the club. This year, the club has nearly doubled in active members from last year as a result of these efforts.

When talking to Coach Jason Morissette he referred to how there has not been a boys hockey team since before Covid. He talked about how he listened to the students at Hal High and put their best interest forward. Coach Morissette talked about how our pride is growing in our high school and how it increases the participation within the school's activities. This year, the junior boys hockey team had 30 students try out. The junior badminton teams had 23 boys try out and 18 girls try out. From prior years, this would be more than double of an increase for girls, and around 30 per cent increase for the boys. Coach Morisette talks about when you look back at the memories of high school, you look at what you loved doing. This year he got to give a lot of kids enjoyable memories. The participation and pride of our Red Hawks has grown and will keep growing.

Going into its second year back at the school, students have been thrilled to join the concert band program, run by Mrs. Mardus, and learn more about music. Extra curricular activities aren't the only thing rising in student participation. The senior drama class, which is preparing for their production of *Fahrenheit 451*, a dystopian play being staged in late April and early May, has 29 students this semester. This is a full class and a significant increase compared to the amount last year. Mrs. Mardus and the students involved are super excited for the play and hope to see a good turn out.

www.haliburtonchamber.com 705-457-4700 admin@haliburtonchamber.com

Haliburton Highlands CHAMBER of COMMERCE

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Interested applicants should forward resumes to:
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by 3pm Friday, April 24, 2026

Full job description available at
hhhs.ca/career-opportunities

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Supported by Young Canada Works in Heritage Organizations.

Visit www.haliburtonsculptureforest.ca for full job description and criteria.

Submit Letter of Interest and CV by April 17 to
info@haliburtonsculptureforest.ca

Caboose Bike Hub

NOTICES

Notice of lock, seizure and rental agreement termination to Richard Magliocca for nonpayment even after grace period. 1st Notice issued March 15th, 2026 Public Notice of default April 1st, 2026. Blake Storage Inc. formally and publicly issues that rental unit 19 rented by Richard Magliocca located at 13513 Hwy 118, Haliburton, Ontario in default for non payment and breach of rental agreement.

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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Marietta Stonehouse-Kish

1939-2026

Marietta passed away peacefully on Sunday March 29, 2026, in Toronto ON. Marietta was born and raised in Hamilton ON; she later moved to Guelph ON and then Toronto ON.

Marietta was a mother, a grandmother, a great-grandmother, a cousin, an aunt, a great-aunt, and a friend and neighbour to many. She was generous and warm, always interested in the lives of others. Marietta was especially interested in young people, as a teacher, a Nanni to Emily, Jonah, Oliver and Oscar, and, more recently, as a great grandmother. Marietta was committed to convening gatherings of the extended Turnbull family and to staying in touch with dear friends. She very much looked forward to the annual Haliburton birthday weekend, with the Van Soest's and the Phipps'.

Marietta was fond of dinner parties, cottage weekends, gin and tonics, Frank Sinatra, reading to kids, chicken paprikas, gingerbread, music, tea, gardening, nature, lobster, Indonesian food, baseball (Go Jays!), baseball hats, chocolate, and, more recently, coffee with old-fashioned plain donuts. She always loved a good laugh and her wry humour was mischievous and distinctive. Marietta was vibrant and always full of fun and adventure.

Together with John and then Ted, Marietta raised Rob and David to be self-reliant, independent and strong. Marietta pulled this off while navigating the late 1960s and 1970s – an era of profound societal change and adjustment.

Many thanks are due to many, many caregivers at St. Michael's Hospital, Providence Health, St. Joseph's Hospital, and Women's College Hospital. The family wishes to acknowledge the staff of the Delmanor Prince Edward, especially the staff of the second floor.

Marietta's request was for a celebration of life, which will be planned for summer 2026, date TBD.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to a charity that supports services to children and youth, or that is involved in the stewardship of the natural environment. One such charity is Sirch, based in Haliburton ON (https://www.sirch.on.ca/).

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THE HALIBURTON COUNTY
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The Voice Of The Highlands Since 1882

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Contract deadlock

■ *Board of education calls for outside help to solve contract dispute with high school teachers*

by PETER DOWNS
Staff Reporter

Haliburton's school board has called in an outside advisor in a bid to settle an impasse in the contract dispute with its high school teachers.

The 47 teachers at Haliburton Highlands Secondary School, who have been working without a contract since the beginning of September, will be in a legal position to strike on April 17.

As of the same date, the board will have the power to lock the teachers out of the school.

The "key stumbling block" that has brought negotiations to a deadlock is the board's demand that the teachers take a one-year, 2.2 per cent wage rollback, according to the Barrie lawyer who was appointed to try to bring the sides back together.

In a county where the teachers' unions — both elementary and secondary — have never taken to the picket line, this appears to be the board's most serious contract dispute yet.

However, negotiating teams for both sides were back at the bargaining table Thursday night trying to work out an agreement for the first time since contract talks ground to a halt in February.

At that time, the board declared an impasse, 10 months after the two sides first met to discuss a contract for the 1996-1997 school year.

The Education Relations Commission appointed lawyer Calum MacLeod as a neutral third party to act as a "fact finder" to examine the causes of the deadlock and recommend possible solutions.

MacLeod met with the two sides on March 5 to discuss their dispute and submitted a 30-page report on his findings about two weeks later.

Only after the board and the teachers' union remained at odds was MacLeod's report made public on Wednesday and sent to all media outlets in the area.

"The release of a fact finding report marks a turning point in negotiations because it opens the door to sanctions," MacLeod writes in the report.

Teachers gain the right to strike 15 days after its release date and the board gains the

See FACT FINDER page 6

Spring's Sweet Return

Kevin Burke pours some of the sap he and Keith Schrader have collected into a large vat which is pulled by horses to the Wruths' sugar shack in Lochlin. For more photos, see page 25.

Spring's back – and so is the "When will the ice melt on Head Lake" contest

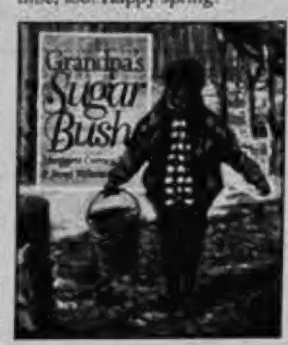
Despite this week's weather, the consensus around the *Echo* office is that spring is truly on its way. And spring means the ice will melt on Head Lake.

Once again, the *Echo* is celebrating spring by holding the "When Will the Ice Melt on Head Lake" contest. From now until April 18, people are invited to guess when the last ice cube will be gone. Once again, Harold Bannon has agreed to become our ice watcher, a task he has performed with meticulous care.

The winner of the contest will receive a year's subscription to the Echo and a copy of another celebration of the rites of spring – Margaret Carney's new children's book, *At Grandpa's Sugar Bush*, which describes spring at the Barry farm in Lutterworth. The book has been donated by the publishers, Kids Can Press.

To submit your guess, you can either drop by our new office overlooking Head Lake (the former Jackson Real Estate) as of April 10, phone us at 457-1037, fax us at 457-3275 or e-mail us at echo@halhinet.on.ca.

Don't forget – you have to make your guess by April 18 at 5 p.m.. And please include a time, too. Happy spring!



Win this book!

Registry Office to stay put

by MARTHA PERKINS
Editor

The Minden OPP might be moving, but the Registry Office in Minden is staying put.

"As far as we're concerned it's not moving, and that's pretty solid and current," says Bud Schaab of the Ontario Realty Corporation in Orillia.

Schaab said they did consider other possible locations, but there was no available government-owned space which was large enough for the Office's needs.

"They are installing a new computer system that will eventually allow them to reduce their space requirements, but that's three years down the road."

Last year, the ORC introduced a policy which intended to minimize the province's leasing and renting costs. If a provincially-funded agency – such as the Minden OPP – did not own their buildings, there was a push to move them into the surplus buildings which were owned by the province. Hence the recent decision to move the Minden OPP office across the highway to the Ministry of Natural Resources office, which has surplus space after last year's layoffs. The OPP building was leased; the MNR's building was owned.

The Registry Office takes up an entire floor of a county-owned building on Newcastle Street.

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-G Simpson, Google Review

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